

## **MINUTES OF THE 88th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016**

Present: - Rupert Clark – Chairman & Treasurer  
Peter Cole – Secretary

### **Chairman's Report**

The Cartwright family and the village were and are fundamentally Protestant. However, the marriage of Rt. Hon. Sir Fairfax Leighton Cartwright, P.C., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., to Donna Maria Chigi from Siena Italy introduced a Catholic flavour to the family. The Chigi family claim a Pope in their medieval ancestry, hence the gold mitre which stood proudly above the late C20th Cartwright Arms sign on the village green.

### **“Recusant Papists of the Aynho District: The secret survival of clandestine Catholics in the C16th – C18th” by Tony Hadland**

As the tribes of modern day Britain became Christian they were essentially Catholic. It is easy to forget we have been a Catholic country for many more years than Protestant. There were Catholic bishops in Britain in the fourth century. Even when Henry VIII, broke from Rome in 1534; we would recognise the church services as Catholic rather than Protestant. Henry was after all given the title Defender of the Faith by the Pope for opposing Luther. The assert-stripping of the monasteries came later; being for his financial benefit and also an act of revenge for being excommunicated over his divorce.

The change of religious style really starts with his son, Edward VI who became a fervent Protestant. The Prayer Book Rebellion in 1549 was against his new “Book of Common Prayer”, revolt was quite prominent in Oxfordshire. Some local Catholic priests were hung, drawn and quartered for their opposition. Their punishment was for treason, for not following the King's wishes rather than as a reaction to their wanting to remain Catholic per se.

Mary I, was brought up as a Catholic. She strove to change everything back again to pre Tudor times. She had a lot of powerful families supporting her, but her burning at the stake of 300 Protestants didn't go down well with most of the country. We must remember that beliefs were a central core to the lives of our fore fathers. Our tolerance and/or indifference to organised religion is at odds to the typical experience of 500 years ago.

Queen Elizabeth1 took a more balanced and pragmatic view. Initially she made the main religion clearly Protestant, but at the same time she was relatively lenient towards Catholics who wished to worship privately.

This continued for some years, until in 1570 Pope Pius V declared that Elizabeth was not a rightful Queen, and that Catholics should attempt to overthrow her. This forced Elizabeth to pass an Act making it treasonable to celebrate Mass, and this was later followed by another Act preventing anyone from preaching Catholicism, or harbouring anyone who did so.

From 1593 people who refused to conform were called “Recusants”. They hid their services, paraphernalia and their priests often in specially constructed priest's holes in safe houses. Spread across Britain, the houses are still giving up their secrets today. Many of the conspirators in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot were recusants. To help keep a supply of clandestine Priests available for

